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**UNITED STATES ARMY
SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND**



SOF Support to Political Warfare

White Paper

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1. Introduction

1-1 Purpose

This white paper presents the concept of SOF Support to Political Warfare to leaders and policymakers as a dynamic means of achieving national security goals and objectives. Embracing the whole-of-government framework with significant targeted military contributions, Political Warfare enables America's leaders to undertake proactive strategic initiatives to shape environments, preempt conflicts, and significantly degrade adversaries' hybrid and asymmetric advantages.

Applied at the regional or global level, Political Warfare emerges from a persistent and purposeful synergy of diplomatic, economic, informational, and military efforts in unified campaigns where military contributions support the attainment of broader strategic end states. Taking advantage of skills, methods, and approaches resident in Special Operations Forces (SOF), Political Warfare's military aspects integrate counter-unconventional warfare (C-UW) and unconventional warfare (UW), foreign internal defense (FID), Security Sector Assistance (SSA), and Information and Influence Activities (IIA), closely calibrated with and in support of those of other government departments.

Political Warfare is a strategy suited to achieve U.S. national objectives through reduced visibility in the international geo-political environment, without committing large military forces. Likewise, Political Warfare can function as a critical, integrating element of U.S. national power against non-state adversaries such as the current Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Most often, the Department of Defense role in Political Warfare will be one of supporting other U.S. Government agencies that are more likely to lead strategy and planning development.

1-2. Background

Political Warfare emerges from the premise that rather than a binary opposition between "war" and "peace," the conduct of international relations is characterized by continuously evolving combinations of collaboration, conciliation, confrontation, and conflict. As such, during times of interstate "peace," the U.S. government must still confront adversaries aggressively and conclusively through all means of national power. When those adversaries practice a form of Hybrid Warfare employing political, military, economic, and criminal tools below the threshold of conventional warfare, the U.S. must overmatch adversary efforts—though without large-scale, extended military operations that may be fiscally unsustainable and diplomatically costly. Hence, the U.S. must embrace a form of sustainable "warfare" rather than "war," through a strategy that closely integrates targeted political, economic, informational, and military initiatives in close collaboration with international partners. Serving the goals of international stability and interstate peace, this strategy amounts to "Political Warfare."

As will be described here, Political Warfare encompasses a spectrum of activities associated with diplomatic and economic engagement, Security Sector Assistance (SSA), novel forms of Unconventional Warfare (UW), and Information and Influence Activities (IIA). Their related activities, programs, and campaigns are woven together into a whole-of-government framework for comprehensive effect. In this regard, Support to Political Warfare is a novel concept in comparison to the last generation of national security thinking and military operational concepts. Yet, Political Warfare is not without recent precursors in U.S. policy and strategy, with the Cold War being a prime example of approaches foreshadowing the current conception.

a. The Twentieth-Century Normal: Cold War and Political Warfare

From our perspective today, the great twentieth-century struggle against communism appears quite different from the current condition. During the Cold War, “winning” was defined as a broad approach to limit, diminish or defeat Communism. No comparable definition of “winning” exists today, as the U.S. struggles to integrate responses to crises as diverse as Ukraine, ISIL, Iranian nuclearization, African Islamist militancy, and even Ebola into a coherent strategy. Additionally, a massive defense infrastructure and budget to support technologically advanced and highly destructive weapons systems were considered integral to anti-Soviet strategy—to the point that the size of the arsenal and accompanying budget was used to signal U.S. prioritization of containing and rolling back communism. Likewise, the U.S. leadership periodically prosecuted large-scale, sustained conventional campaigns along the margins of the communist world—Korea, and Vietnam are examples of these, as was the basing and reinforcement of U.S. forces in Central Europe.

Considered from another perspective, Cold War policies foreshadow the proposed concept of political warfare. During the cold War era, the West’s political and military leadership knew well that the ultimate center of gravity consisted of the cognitive and affective fields of the Human Domain. Additionally, while prior to WWII American military operations were frequently unintegrated with efforts of other U.S. Government (USG) organizations addressing related strategic issues, during that conflict and the Cold War the anti-Communist mission became a unified objective across the federal government. This can be seen in the political-diplomatic-ideological goals of the Marshall Plan, the aspirations of the Truman Doctrine, and particularly the political and socio-cultural effect sought from the establishment of NATO and the myriad of overt and covert initiatives in the cognitive and affective realms of the Human Domain both east and west of the Iron Curtain.¹

Finally, though the U.S. employed military force in foreign areas in an overwhelmingly reactive fashion up through the Korean War, subsequent military engagement was frequently preemptive, with associated paramilitary and intelligence activities being proactive. As an example, Cold War counter-insurgency (COIN) and UW activities in Southeast Asia and several

Central and South American countries, generally conducted by Special Operations Forces (SOF)—were pre-emptive, seeking to limit the spread of global Communism.

Beyond the levels of policy and operations, the very conceptual basis and rationale for U.S. concepts of Political Warfare were articulated during the early Cold War years by George F. Kennan, America's foremost Soviet expert and State Department architect of the policy of Containment of Soviet/communist expansion. In 1948, Kennan called for "the logical application of Clausewitz's doctrine in time of peace." While stopping short of the direct kinetic confrontation between two countries' armed forces, "political warfare is the employment of all the means at a nation's command... to achieve its national objectives." A country embracing Political Warfare conducts "both overt and covert" operations in the absence of declared war or overt force-on-force hostilities. Efforts "range from such overt actions as political alliances, economic measures..., and 'white' propaganda to such covert operations as clandestine support of 'friendly' foreign elements, 'black' psychological warfare and even encouragement of underground resistance in hostile states."

Recognizing that other world powers such as the British Empire's Political Warfare Executive and the Soviet Union regularly practiced Political Warfare, Kennan called for America's post-WWII leadership to disabuse itself of the "handicap" of the "concept of a basic difference between peace and war," and wake up to "the realities of international relations—the perpetual rhythm of struggle, in and out of war."² To match this rhythm, Kennan in effect called for the broad use of UW, one of the primary mission areas of Special Forces in the 1950s.

b. The Post-Cold War Retreat from Political Warfare

Therefore, on the levels of policy, strategic thought and operations, approaches foreshadowing Political Warfare have not been alien to American national security system. Rather, it can be argued that the U.S. has "gotten out of the habit of waging political warfare since the end of the Cold War." With a residual preference for large-scale combined arms operations reminiscent of Operation Desert Storm, the U.S. entered the post-September 11, 2001 world with a reliance on "public diplomacy aimed at 'telling America's story,'"³ in order to diffuse anti-American animus in the Muslim world. Likewise, military responses to post-9/11 challenges emerged as sustained, large scale deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, in addition to frequently reactive counterterrorism (CT) and COIN.

Given the emerging threat environment, however, as well as the prohibitively costly and politically unsustainable nature of most kinds of extended, large scale military operations, the time has come for Political Warfare to recapture a predominant position in U.S. national security policy and execution. With innovative state and nonstate adversaries willing to confront the U.S. across a spectrum of sustained activities, American leaders can avoid the conceptual "handicap" highlighted by Kennan, and embrace ongoing Political Warfare, to include the informational, influence, and unconventional warfare campaigns to which Kennan pointed. Of course, these

kinds of activities require miniscule resources when compared to the Cold War and operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, and are the very kinds of campaigns at which SOF excels.

1-3. Emerging Operating Environment

The operating environment that has emerged since the end of the Cold War has also demonstrated the intellectual and policy futility of a dichotomous understanding of war and peace and of traditional understandings of military-dominated, openly declared, force-on-force armed confrontation as the predominant mode of warfare. Rather, resurgent state adversaries, rising regional powers, and nonstate armed elements seeking to dominate the military, political, and ideological arenas have practiced novel forms of warfare during times of both “peace” and “war.” The U.S. will not be able to counter such threats and seize the strategic initiative without a more agile employment of whole-of-government resources, driven by a more supple national security sensibility embracing Political Warfare.

a. Hybrid Warfare: Russia in its ‘Near Abroad’

The most immediately visible form of novel warfare practices during “peacetime” can be seen in Russia, the inheritors of what Kennan referred to as “the most refined and effective” conduct of Political Warfare “of any in history.”⁴ Since the early spring of 2014, Russia’s form of Political Warfare has emerged as intensive Hybrid Warfare in Ukraine. Russia currently employs special operations forces, intelligence agents, political provocateurs, and media representatives, as well as transnational criminal elements in eastern and southern Ukraine.⁵ Resourced and orchestrated by the Kremlin and operating with differing degrees of deniability or even acknowledgement, Russian Hybrid Warfare uses such “little green men” for classic UW objectives. These objectives include causing chaos and disrupting civil order, while seeking to provoke excessive responses by the state’s security organs, thus delegitimizing the Kiev government. Additionally, Russian elements have organized pro-Russian separatists, filling out their ranks with advisors and fighters. Russia’s UW has also included funding, arming, tactical coordination, and fire support for separatist operations.⁶ The latter component, combined with large-scale conventional force posturing along the Russian-Ukrainian border, aerial harassment of NATO naval assets in the Black Sea, and continuous diplomatic engagement and intimidation of NATO states and the Ukraine government, illustrate the Kremlin’s embedding of UW in a much broader Hybrid Warfare campaign.

While enabling a frequency of tactical success against Ukrainian forces putting the latter at a distinct strategic disadvantage, insurgency aided by Russian UW has achieved operational goals of gaining local supporters and intimidating dissenters into acquiescing to a separation from the government in Kiev.⁷ In such fashion, Russian Hybrid Warfare has secured the strategic goals of acquiring the Crimea, pushing the pro-Russian buffer zone farther west into the Ukraine, threatening Odessa, and increasing the perception of Russian power in Azerbaijan and

Armenia,⁸ as well as in the Asia-Pacific region, in the latter case to the potential detriment of U.S. energy policy interests.⁹

Russian operations in Ukraine are part of a broader Hybrid Warfare offensive over the past decade. Associated actions have included cyber-attacks on private and government websites in former Soviet areas—to include NATO member states; agitation and economic infiltration among Russian speaking populations in the Baltics; and support to separatists in former Soviet Republics in order to provoke disproportionate local responses that could justify Russian conventional invasion—the case in Georgia. Likewise, Russian Hybrid Warfare has used oil and natural gas exports as a tool to influence government policies in former Soviet and central Europe; prosecuted overall force expansion programs accompanied by conventional force posturing in military exclaves among NATO states; and returned to violations of NATO and NATO-partner countries' airspace and maritime zones, while prosecuting an influence and psychological operations campaign in the Russian-speaking diaspora, at times with the goal of promoting secession from states bordering NATO and affiliation with Russia.¹⁰

Russian measures in Ukraine and beyond over the past decade illustrate the implementation of emerging Russian operational concepts. Russian military theoreticians have argued for a “combination of political, economic, information, technological, and ecological campaigns in the form of indirect actions and nonmilitary measures” in order to “level off the enemy's superiority in armed struggle... neutraliz[ing] adversary actions without resorting to weapons.”¹¹ In 2013, the Russian Chief of the General Staff noted that “the role of nonmilitary means of achieving political and strategic goals has grown, and, in many cases, they have exceeded the power of force of weapons in their effectiveness.” These means include “special-operations forces and internal opposition to create a permanently operating front through the entire territory of the enemy state, as well as informational actions, devices, and means that are constantly being perfected.”¹² Significantly, with the exception of the Georgian conflict, these concepts and their implementation in the past few years stop short of war itself, and are taken in order to obtain political-economic benefit. Hence, Russian Hybrid Warfare has many elements of what the U.S. considers Political Warfare.¹³

b. China's Unrestricted Warfare

Even during the period of post-Soviet Russian weakness prior to Vladimir Putin's ascent, other countries were developing concepts specifically designed to counter the U.S. conventional superiority. In 1999, two Chinese People's Liberation Army colonels argued that in order to counter the conventional superiority of the U.S., China should use a host of methods, many of which lie out of the realm of conventional warfare. These methods include trade warfare, financial warfare, ecological warfare, psychological warfare, smuggling warfare, media warfare, drug warfare, network warfare, technological warfare, fabrication warfare, resources warfare, economic aid warfare, cultural warfare, and international law warfare.¹⁴ These methods amount

to “unrestricted warfare,” whose first rule stipulates “that there are no rules, with nothing forbidden.”¹⁵

In 2003, the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee and the Central Military Commission drew on “unrestricted warfare” concepts to promulgate a “Three Warfares” concept. Here, *Psychological Warfare* seeks to undermine an enemy’s operational ability by demoralizing enemy military and civilian populations through “television, radio broadcast, loudspeakers, leaflets, and calculated military operations,”¹⁶ accompanied by “diplomatic pressure, rumors, false narratives, and harassment to ‘express displeasure, assert hegemony, and convey threats.’”¹⁷ *Media Warfare* seeks to influence domestic and international public opinion to build support for military actions and dissuade adversaries from actions contrary to China’s interests. It also targets the Chinese diaspora to garner support for “Chinese public diplomacy and espionage operations throughout the world.”¹⁸ *Legal Warfare* uses international and domestic law to claim the legal high ground or assert Chinese interests. It can be employed to hamstring an adversary’s operational freedom and shape the operational space. Legal warfare is also intended “to build international support and manage possible political repercussions of China’s military actions.”¹⁹ China has already used Legal Warfare to cause friction among adversaries and influence interpretation of international law.

c. Iranian Asymmetric Warfare

Iran is distinct from Russia and China. Nevertheless, it practices a mode of continual warfare indicative of the emerging and future operating environments characterized by asymmetry, the pursuit of political goals, and the avoidance of large-scale conflict. Conceived by its developers as defensive, Iran’s military doctrine combines the use of conventional, guerrilla, and special operations forces, in order to “deter an attack, survive an initial strike, retaliate against an aggressor, and force a diplomatic solution to hostilities while avoiding any concessions that challenge its core interests.”²⁰ While fielding more capable ballistic missiles to counter threats from Israel and other actors in the region and developing the capability to launch intercontinental ballistic missiles,²¹ Iran has sought anti-access and area denial capabilities through asymmetric means, to include “hit and run attacks with sea and land-launched anti-ship cruise missiles, mines, mini-sub and suicide boats,”²² as well as cheaply-produced fast attack craft amounting to little more than speed boats—able to endanger much more expensive and slow moving U.S. vessels.²³

A major element of Iranian asymmetric warfare involves covert support to proxy forces in the region and beyond, whose activities support Iranian national objectives. The Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) is funded through an annual military budget of \$5 billion as well as through funds based on widespread legal and illicit economic enterprises estimated at \$13 billion per year.²⁴ The IRGC provides material support to terrorist or militant groups whose goals are broadly aligned with Iranian interests—including countering U.S. regional engagement.

These include HAMAS, Lebanese Hezbollah, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the Taliban, and Iraqi Shia groups.²⁵ The IRGC has also enabled targeted execution operations in the U.S. and European capitals.

Along with the UW mission of support to proxy forces, IRGC and other regime-affiliated elements have provided funding to Shiite educational initiatives and political dissident groups in the Arab Gulf region, and have perpetuated an influence campaign seeking to discredit regional rulers on religio-ethical grounds.

Finally, Iran has rapidly developed its defensive and offensive cyber capabilities. Part of this effort seeks to keep Iranians from encountering Western ideas and content, which would contribute to the development of a “soft revolution” that would harm the stability of the regime.²⁶ Iranian asymmetric warfare is thus directed against domestic, regional, and global perceived threats, and clearly mobilizes resources beyond the traditional military sector.

d. Hezbollah

As one of Iran’s chief proxies, Hezbollah has employed multiple lines of effort in conducting asymmetric political warfare, directed against Israel, domestic political opponents, and the interests of adversary foreign states operating in Lebanon. In addition to widespread and persistent use of terrorism against targets in Lebanon, the Middle East, and Europe as well as the western hemisphere, Hezbollah has also employed insurgency tactics, rendering parts of Lebanese territory as a sort of “Hezbollah-land” passable by government forces only at the former’s discretion. Inspired by its Iranian patron, Hezbollah has also engaged in Counter-UW (C-UW) in Syria, shoring up the forces of the Assad regime. Hezbollah has prosecuted a sophisticated influence campaign within its area of control by using terrestrial and satellite television, radio, and web-based media, in addition to powerfully emotive images and messages on billboards, and even in museums. Through Iranian funding, as well as organized crime, extortion, and narco-trafficking in the region and as far afield as Latin America, it has also been able to sustain social welfare institutions gaining adherents in and beyond the Shiite community, gaining legitimacy for itself while discrediting the Lebanese state. At the same time, it has used its communal and regional support base to participate and gain predominance in Lebanon’s political institutions, further influencing the country’s geopolitical orientation. All the while, Hezbollah has gained much increased sophistication in the technical, tactical, and operational components of warfighting—synchronizing military operations to clear political end states.

2. Future Operating Environment

a. Global Power Diffusion

The U.S. National Intelligence Council (NIC) currently projects a much greater diffusion of global power in the near future, with the resultant multipolarity driving geopolitical instability. According to the NIC, “by 2030, no country—whether the U.S., China, or any other large country—will be a hegemonic power.”²⁷ Rising regional states such as China, Russia, India, Brazil, Indonesia, Turkey and Iran will assert growing power and influence regionally and globally to secure their political, social, or economic interests. The U.S. national leadership will thus employ the elements of national power in an international environment where alliances change more frequently and adversarial relationships will be more common and nuanced than in the past.

b. Non-State and Semi-State Actors

The diffusion of global power will also be manifest as an increased role by non-state actors seeking greater influence from the local-to-global level. The rapid spread of ever-improving weapons and information technology will prove an enabler in this respect: “Individuals and small groups will have greater access to lethal and disruptive technologies (particularly precision-strike capabilities, cyber instruments, and bioterror weaponry), enabling them to perpetrate large-scale violence—a capability formerly the monopoly of states.”²⁸ Violent extremists as well as criminal organizations will use these tools with little restraint in order to achieve their desired effects. Indeed, the cyber domain in particular will permit small groups and individuals to achieve truly disproportionate effects.

Notably, however, recent events suggest that nonstate actors may increasingly aspire towards para-statal manifestations. Foreshadowed by the Palestine Liberation Organization on the political-economic pane during the 1970s and 1980s, groups like Hamas and Hezbollah have not only sought not to oppose internal and external powers, but they have sought to act like a state, or usurp the state itself.²⁹ Most recently, Sunni Jihadi extremists claiming a boundless “Islamic State” now seek to overthrow national governments, local administrations, and social-political structures in a wide swathe from eastern Syria to northwestern Iraq, replacing them with a regional Muslim Caliphate obtaining funds from nonstate sponsors in the very Arab Gulf states whose governments are now cooperating with the U.S.³⁰ In a more geographically focused way, the Houthi rebels have of late solidified their hold on a quasi-state in Northwestern Yemen, and moved beyond their traditional stronghold and preference for autonomy from the central government, to occupy the country’s Red Sea Ports and parts of the capitol.³¹ These cases have also featured evolving combinations of insurgency, acts of terrorism, and UW aided by information campaigns, political alliance-making, and economic measures—in effect kinetic action along with Political Warfare.

c. Advancing Computing Power and Information and Communications Technologies

Technology will continue to influence the course, tempo, and toll of conflict in the FOE, particularly through advances in computing power and the broadening dissemination of information communications technologies (ICT). Regarding the former, today's computer systems process a much greater number of more complicated operations than in the recent past; processing speed and complexity advance at a staggering rate. These increases in speed and operational complexity will characterize consumer products such as laptops and tablet computers. Significantly, this class of devices will also be available more widely in the FOE, at lower prices. Therefore, a technology once the preserve of governments, prestigious labs, and the wealthy will be accessed by a broadening social stratum—to include those in areas characterized by increased population, urbanization, climate degradation and non-state actor proliferation.

Beyond computing power, the truly revolutionary aspect of emergent technology development is in the realm of communications, which has seen the rapid diffusion of both person-to-person and social media ICTs. Cellular, Wi-Fi, and ground-based networks can move such large amounts of information so much farther and faster than in the recent past as to permit a speed of communication and action quite outpacing even a decade ago. Global internet penetration rates, as well as the rate by which mobile access of the internet increases, continue to increase.³² Further, the tools associated with such networks have become increasingly inexpensive, disposable, and broadly capable. Thus, the network-creating nature of social media will ensure that individual or small group experiences in the FOE become shared consciousness of a transnational and self-selecting collective.

An ease of message making and dissemination will thus characterize the FOE, accelerating a “battle of narratives” in which nonstate elements and amorphous, event-driven groupings will erase the relative nation-state monopoly of narratives during the industrial era.³³ Thus the diversity of narratives, their speed of dissemination, and their rate of change will be dizzying, to the advantage of all but state actors. As such, the FOE will complete the transition of the internet from being a mostly passive canvas of material (Web 1.0) to an environment where users are contributors through wikis, blogs, and social networking (Web 2.0), and then to one where computers regularly manipulate data for purposes of analysis, profiling, and influence (Web 3.0). The potential for ethically unconstrained adversary states and non-states to employ these technologies to Hybrid Warfare advantage will remain great.

d. Hybrid Warfare

As we saw with the Russian case above, hybrid threats will likely define the nature of warfare in the future operating environment, providing a diverse array of options through which America's adversaries will confront us and our global partners. Hybrid Warfare includes “any adversary that simultaneously employs a tailored mix of conventional weapons, irregular tactics,

terrorism, and criminal behavior in the same time and battlespace to obtain their political objectives.” Hybrid threats will also liberally employ proxies, surrogates, and unwitting population groups, as well as actions whose first-order effects are non-violent. Hoffman describes these effects as “economic and financial acts, subversive political acts like creating or covertly exploiting trade unions and NGOs as fronts, or information operations using false websites and planted newspaper articles,” in addition to “diplomatic tools... as part of a larger conception of warfare.”³⁴

Given adversary practices in the emerging operating environment, as well as the likely features of the future operating environment, the U.S. must now develop and implement military operating concepts galvanizing a whole-of-government strategy to contain, and deter threats to our national interests while permitting our national leadership to seize the initiative in international affairs in defense of the American people—yet without major military confrontations and unsustainable budget expenditures. Persistent engagement of Political Warfare, facilitated and synchronized by capabilities inherent to SOF, provides a principal solution set.

3. Military Problem and Components of Solution

3-1 Problem Statement

How does the United States counter and deter the asymmetric and hybrid warfare employed by our state and nonstate adversaries during both “war” and “peace” across the spectrum of conflict? How can the U.S. respond optimally to hybrid and asymmetric challenges while accounting for fiscal limitations and political sensitivity to large-scale operations? What is the best means to fully synchronize Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental, and Multinational (JIIM) responses to hybrid challenges?

3-2. Central Idea

U.S. policy makers require a suite of complementary options enabling them to counter and deter hybrid and asymmetric warfare practiced by state and nonstate adversaries. As hybrid and asymmetric warfare rely on surrogates, proxy forces, insurgents and supporting influence operations, effective U.S. policy responses require capabilities to a) comprehensively mitigate the effect of subversion, UW, and delegitimizing narratives in partner countries targeted by adversaries; and b) dissuade adversaries from conducting hybrid warfare by increasing the cost of such activities to the point that they become unsustainable. The former effort involves strengthening the capabilities, capacity, and legitimacy of partners, while the latter involves aggressively countering subversion and UW waged against friendly states, proactively employing coercive diplomacy, legal-economic measures, and UW against adversaries, and aggressively prosecuting a battle of narratives to undermine adversary legitimacy among critical populations.

The U.S. and its partners can indeed overmatch adversaries practicing hybrid warfare and achieve escalation dominance against future adversaries—but only through a thoroughly whole-of-government approach informed by unity of effort and purpose expressed through integrated strategy and cohesive policy options. This all amounts to Political Warfare, a supple, synergistic, and evolving use of “both overt and covert” tools at America’s disposal, with an emphasis on coercive diplomatic and economic engagement, Security Sector Assistance (SSA), information and influence activities (IIA), and diverse forms of unconventional warfare (UW).

A thoroughly whole-of-government endeavor, Political Warfare is by no means the preserve of SOF. Given its diplomatic and economic content and its focus on achieving political ends, Political Warfare is likely best led by agencies beyond DoD.³⁵ Indeed, Political Warfare can only succeed if it is conducted in a way to “elevate civilian power alongside military power as equal pillars of U.S. foreign policy.”³⁶ Yet, as SSA, UW and IIA hinge on skill sets cultivated by SOF, the latter are uniquely positioned to support both the joint force and America’s agencies beyond DOD leading Political Warfare strategies. Furthermore, SOF are unique in the Department of Defense, suited to integrate Political Warfare’s activities across the JIIM spectrum. Army Special Operators have a proven track record of bridging indigenous forces, local populations, Joint Force components, U.S. agencies, and coalition partners needed for an effective Political Warfare response to hybrid warfare. SOF must be the expert practitioners of this form of warfare to lead DOD’s contribution.

3-3. Definitional Building Blocks of 21st-Century Political Warfare

Political Warfare emerges from a Whole-of-Government approach to international diplomatic and security engagement, with agencies beyond DOD performing critical, if not leadership, roles. The overall Political Warfare effort relies on the synchronized and evolving combination of capabilities possessed, enabled, or supported by SOF. They include coercive diplomacy, economic coercion and engagement, Security Sector Assistance, Unconventional Warfare, and information and Influence Activities. Understanding these capabilities is thus integral to generating a concept of Political Warfare appropriate to the future operating environment.

a. Diplomacy: Persuasive and Coercive

Diplomacy, and its economic means, is an important initial tool through which to counter adversary hybrid warfare against partner states, and is often critical to setting the conditions for more aggressive economic or military responses. One form of diplomacy may be referred to as *persuasive* diplomacy. Other options include the employment of unconventional diplomacy or unconventional statecraft.³⁷ Here U.S. diplomacy can incline friends and neutral states to more robust participation in countering adversary hybrid warfare. In persuasive diplomacy, the U.S. can work bilaterally as well as multilaterally. Addressing partner or potential partner countries, the U.S. may establish bilateral strategic agreements in the realms of security, economics, and

areas of particular concern to the particular country, bolstered by aid targeted to areas that implicitly support common Political Warfare efforts. Likewise, the U.S. can indicate diplomatic favor and increase the regional standing of the state in question through frequent cabinet level visits and summits, as well as through the kind of cultural exchanges and ties used so well during the Cold War to increase mutual bilateral awareness and sympathy.

Further, the American diplomacy can advocate for partner state leadership roles in regional organizations—African Union, European Union, etc.—as well as in global bodies such as the UN and World Bank. Access to leadership roles in such bodies increases the standing of the country in question, enables more meaningful diplomatic cooperation, and empowers both the U.S. and the partnered state to counter hybrid warfare activities more effectively and with increased international credibility. All these bilateral efforts have the benefit of communicating commitment to the partner state, as well as resolve to the adversary state or nonstate actor(s). These efforts also prepare the environment for subsequent Political Warfare military engagement, enabling the kinds of SOF activities to be described further on in this paper.

At the multilateral level, effective Political Warfare requires that the U.S. continue to engage international organizations persistently and positively, motivating them both to adopt positions and programs counter to the activities associated with adversary hybrid warfare, and to censure those countries engaging in it. Though the processes and at times outcomes in fora such as the UN, EU, AU, ASEAN, the World Court, INTERPOL, etc., are perhaps suboptimal, they are critical to creating a commonality of attitudes and concerns, for strengthening bilateral relationships, and for providing backbone to neutral or targeted states. Furthermore, engagement with these bodies demonstrates consideration for the concerns of members and for international legality, and may result in decisions that bind member states.

Finally, regional security alliances such as NATO are critical to attaining a consensus on the character and dangers of hybrid warfare, and also to developing diplomatically sustainable political-military-economic response, even if all member states do not act explicitly in terms of Political Warfare. Ultimately, these global bodies—particularly those which integrate regional governments in common security arrangements—play to SOF's strength as JIIM connective tissue for Political Warfare, particularly through the Global SOF Network (GSN), to be discussed further on.³⁸

Beyond persuasive diplomacy, the U.S. may apply persistent *coercive* diplomacy to hybrid threats, relying on capabilities which mesh SOF and CF strengths. Coercive diplomacy emerges from theories related to deterrence and compellance developed during the Cold War.³⁹ Its originator, Alexander George, aimed “to articulate a policy relevant theory of coercive diplomacy in which threats, persuasion, positive inducements, and accommodation were integrated into a crisis bargaining strategy that provided political leaders with an alternative to war or to strictly coercive military strategies.”⁴⁰ Indeed, the U.S. and NATO sought to contain and roll back Soviet adventurism without the need for large scale, sustained military action.

Such action would be considered a total failure. Therefore, coercive diplomacy is thus well-suited to today's political-economic circumstances.

Coercive diplomacy is a “political-diplomatic strategy that aims to influence an adversary’s will or incentive structure.” Rather than deterrence, which is *preventative* in nature, coercive diplomacy is intended to cause an adversary to *cease* activities, and if possible *reverse* previous actions and change policies.⁴¹ In this respect, excessive use of coercion in the absence of a convincing initial provocation reduces the approach to one of bullying aggression. Rather, the “central task of coercive diplomacy [is] to create in the opponent the expectation of costs of sufficient magnitude to erode his motivation to continue what he is doing,” by combining diplomatic, economic, and military threats with broader mobilization of partners and allies, as part of a bargaining strategy including “conditional inducements of a positive character” to incentivize an adversary’s retreat from aggressive activities.⁴²

Coercive diplomacy is therefore just that—diplomacy providing political leaders an alternative to war. Yet, the strategy does envision the use of force, for demonstrative and psychological effect. Rather than a “quick, decisive military strategy” seeking to destroy enemy capabilities to perpetuate conflict by “bludgeoning him... or physically preventing him” from acting in a certain manner,⁴³ coercive diplomacy advocates for “the limited and selective use of force in discrete and controlled increments,”⁴⁴ and “carefully measured, discrete doses.”⁴⁵ In this conception, force is a “much more flexible, refined, psychological instrument of policy.”⁴⁶ The “exemplary use of quite limited force” must be of the “appropriate kind to demonstrate resolution to protect one’s interests and establish the credibility of one’s determination to use more force if necessary.”⁴⁷ Leaving the adversary “the capacity of organized violence” but driving them to “choose not to use it,”⁴⁸ effectively employed coercive diplomacy may “induce an adversary to comply with one’s demands... while simultaneously managing the crisis to prevent unwanted military escalation.”⁴⁹

Coercive diplomacy is open to failure, of course—the need to conduct Operation Desert Storm in 1991 could be considered such failure, as the military and diplomatic coercion of the preceding several months did not compel Saddam Hussein’s withdrawal. Likewise, coercive diplomacy has not been employed with effect in the Korean Peninsula, and after the U.S. threatened Japan with an oil embargo in July 1941, “coercive diplomacy provoked the adversary into a decision for war.”⁵⁰ There have been some notable cases of its success however, to include during the Cuban missile Crisis, and potentially during the 2013 chemical weapons crisis in Syria.⁵¹

International relations scholars have enumerated several conditions which must obtain in order for coercive diplomacy to be judged a success. Many of these hinge on the adversary leadership’s perceptions and goals, as well as fear of escalation. Additionally, experts consider the coercing state’s strength of motivation, clarity of goals, sense of urgency and red lines, and

domestic political support as critical variables to determining the viability or success of a coercive diplomacy campaign.⁵²

While these variables rely on multiple interactive factors, it is in the realm of an additional condition—usable military options—that the Joint Force, and SOF in particular, can empower our national leadership with viable options to conduct coercive diplomacy. As indicated here, force needs to be limited, focused, discrete, and credible, hinting at the consequences of continued adversarial actions. Likewise, force must be synchronized with the diplomatic actions it supports, and signal an intent not to “bludgeon,” but to demonstrate “resolution,” “credibility,” and “determination.” When Special Warfare and surgical Strike are embedded in the planning and execution of a larger political-diplomatic coercive strategy, SOF kinetic and non-kinetic effects furnish our national leadership with the necessary “psychological instrument of policy” in a strategy whose success “rests in the last analysis on psychological variables.”⁵³

b. Economic Aid or Coercion

Economic measures are frequently used as the means through which diplomatic engagement seeks effect. In this regard, economic aid can signal diplomatic support, and can ease the burdens on a partner country as it seeks to counter a hybrid threat. This tool has recently been used with Ukraine, by both the U.S. and EU.⁵⁴ Likewise, a whole-of-government and international approach to economic aid and capacity building has the potential to remedy short-term crises, improve government capabilities and legitimacy, and signal and enduring commitment on the part of the U.S. and its allies to the state and society under hybrid threats.⁵⁵ It may also lessen the attractiveness inside a targeted country of hybrid warfare’s UW, terrorism, and organized crime activities. Of course, economic aid and capacity building—by which a country gets “skin in the game,” can be among the first steps towards future military aid, in which C-UW will play a role. Finally, economic aid and capacity building in a country targeted by hybrid warfare can reduce the resource and commodity reliance of the targeted state on the adversary. This is an important consideration when states are targeted by much larger, wealthier adversaries with whom they shared a preexisting aid/trade relationship—that is, most of Russia’s neighbors.

This latter contribution of economic aid to Political Warfare hints at its potential role in coercive diplomacy. Indeed, sanctions are a well-known tool of international diplomacy, targeting the economic and material capacity of pariah states to perpetuate behavior counter to international stability. Sanctions have recently been used against global powers undertaking hybrid warfare aggression—Russia in Ukraine.⁵⁶ Additionally, “coercive” aid can be used in a positive sense—to elicit or sustain activities the U.S. wishes to see from other states—or to threaten the cessation of economic assistance to states that receive it from the U.S., either through attaching political-economic conditions to the disbursement of further aid, or from interruptions, slow-downs, or reductions in aid in order to coerce changes in actions of states tending towards adversary behavior.⁵⁷ Economic coercion and coercive aid, however, can easily

be turned to the adversary state's advantage, permitting it to oppress domestic populations while diverting all resources to regime survival, while encouraging large scale transnational illicit economic activities. It is thus essential to synchronize economic aid to partnered states with coercion of others, providing "conditional inducements of a positive nature" which are viable in the local context. Given historical lessons from pre-WWII Japan, post-1991 Iraq and elsewhere, it may be that economic aid and capacity building exceeds economic coercion in Political Warfare utility, especially given characteristics of the FOE. In this regard, the 2010 *Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review's* recommendations regarding aid and development should be fully implemented.⁵⁸

c. Security Sector Assistance

A security sector is composed of those institutions in a society that possess the authority to use or threaten force to protect populations, resources, territory, and common interests. It includes both military and civilian security organizations, and even those justice management and civil society organizations that have an oversight, monitoring, or policy advocacy role with respect to military and law enforcement. Most broadly, the security sector comprises "structures, institutions and personnel responsible for the management, provision and oversight of security in a country."⁵⁹ The security sector is thus much more than the military and even police, but includes multiple nodes for positive U.S. influence in support of Political Warfare objectives.

In Security Sector Assistance (SSA), the U.S. seeks to help foreign partners shape policies in the security sector and build and support military and law enforcement organizations with the capability, capacity, and effectiveness to secure national populations and resources. This assistance serves larger goals of 1) encouraging other states to address security challenges shared with the U.S.; 2) gaining greater foreign country support for U.S. regional and global interests, to include military access to airspace and basing rights, improved interoperability and training opportunities, and cooperation across a range of military, security, and diplomatic activities; 3) ensuring the spread of socio-political values and practices that strengthen a sovereign government and immunize it against hybrid warfare practices; and 4) strengthening collective security alliances and multinational defense organizations as a common front to oppose state and nonstate hybrid warfare.⁶⁰ Among SSA's activities are Security Sector Reform, Building Partner Capacity, and Foreign Internal Defense. All of these are mutually reinforcing, overlapping activities with an ultimately political purpose requiring tight coordination among JIIM participants—and they all permit the U.S. and its partners to counter Hybrid Warfare and seize the initiative in Political Warfare.

(1) Security Sector Reform (SSR)

SSR is understood by the U.S. interagency as a "set of policies, plans, programs, and activities that a government undertakes to improve the way it provides safety, security, and justice" in a fashion that is "transparent, accountable to civilian authority, and responsive to the

needs of the public.” SSR focuses on “defense and armed forces reform; civilian management and oversight; justice; police; corrections; intelligence reform; national security planning and strategy support; border management; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR); and/or reduction of armed violence.”⁶¹ According to some, it also includes establishing or strengthening the capabilities of NGOs that support, monitor, or advocate for policy changes in the security sector. In this respect SSR considers the whole-of-government and whole-of-society as its target audience.⁶²

Originally conceived in the post-Soviet context of Central and Eastern European states’ transition from authoritarian to representative rule, SSR concepts were first articulated by international organizations such as the European Union, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the UN. Additionally, national governments in Britain, Germany, and Scandinavia embraced SSR concepts, implementing programs in former Soviet regions. One aspect of SSR aligns with traditional U.S. Security Cooperation and Security Assistance, in that it focuses on improving the policy, technical, and operational competencies of all components of the security sector, at all echelons. The second, related aspect of SSR focuses on the legal, ethical, and political framework of a country’s security sector, seeking to build institutions and reform practices that ensure transparency, rule of law, and respect for the human and civil rights of citizens and neighboring countries. SSR has also sought to ensure adequate civilian participation in and oversight of security sector activities. In the past decade, SSR programs have also been implemented in Latin America and Africa, with limited engagement in the Middle East.

Overall, SSR seeks to make a country’s national security establishment more capable, agile, and legal, in addition to more responsive and responsible to the democratically articulated political will of its citizens. In short, SSR can gain for a country’s government and security organs greater effectiveness, popular legitimacy, and suitability for international partnering. Effective SSR needs to address the whole-of-government—and thus needs to be strategized and conducted as a whole-of-government initiative by countries contributing to the effort. It must mesh the expertise and perspectives of civilians and military personnel, and must also cultivate a civil society able to monitor and contribute to a country’s security climate. If meeting its goals, SSR can immunize a country against internal dissent by addressing grievances, thus reducing the impact of subversion, insurgency, and other hybrid warfare practices. Rather than “security consumers,”⁶³ countries embracing SSR can act as regional Political Warfare partners, aiding neighbors’ stability while serving goals shared with the U.S.

Given its political, legal, institutional, and diplomatic content, SSR is clearly an area where DOD supports other lead agencies. In the DOD realm, SSR capitalizes CF and SOF capabilities; given the latter’s unique skills and inherently JIIM sensibility, SSR might even be the focus of a SOF campaign, or of the SOF contribution to the regional manifestation of a Political Warfare

campaign, with significant positive impacts on a country's socio-politics and ability to support U.S. Political Warfare itself.⁶⁴

(2) Building Partner Capacity (BPC)

Building Partner Capacity (BPC) is a Political Warfare-appropriate policy tool whose activities align with those of “security cooperation,” “security assistance,” and “security forces assistance.” - BPC aims to “build relationships that promote specified U.S. interests, build allied and friendly nation capabilities for self-defense and coalition operations, [and] provide U.S. forces with peacetime and contingency access.”⁶⁵ Including the provision of “defense articles and services in support of [U.S.] national policies and objectives,”⁶⁶ BPC concentrates on improving the “*collective* capabilities and performance” of the U.S. and current as well as emerging partners.⁶⁷ By increasing skills, agility, and capacity throughout a partner state's military, security, and police institutions, broad spectrum whole-of-government BPC enables our regional allies “to make valuable contributions to coalition operations and to improve their own indigenous capabilities.”⁶⁸ As it has evolved over the past decade-and-a-half, BPC can address current allies and partners with “mature forces,” or indigenous forces with “tactical shortcomings,” but it can also create military and security institutions “from whole cloth” for the purposes of attaining BPC goals.⁶⁹ U.S. SOF and CF elements have registered notable successes in all three areas.

In any combatant command (COCOM), BPC initiatives are expressed through a theater security cooperation plan (TSCP). The TSCP must align with local U.S. Embassy Mission Strategy and Resource Plans (MSRPs), and should consider the DoS-USAID Joint Strategic Plan (JSP) as well as the DoS's Joint Regional Strategies (JRS). This is particularly true as DoS develops the overall multi-year plan for regional security assistance, and administers related efforts in coordination with DoD.

BPC benefits from recursive relationship with SSR. As such, BPC is effective only when thoroughly coordinated among joint, interagency, and international participants. SOF thus perform a critical role in furthering BPC goals. Not only should every SOF-local partner interaction seek to build mutual capability, capacity, and interoperability, but the unique position of the theater special operations command (TSOC)—at its best, a node connecting COCOM joint force assets, the U.S. interagency, global coalition members, and local partners—enables it to function as a synchronizer of BPC activities, blending them into an overall campaign in support of a Political Warfare strategy.

(3) Foreign Internal Defense (FID)

Foreign Internal Defense consists of “participation by civilian and military agencies of a government in any of the action programs taken by another government or other designated organization to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, insurgency, terrorism, and other threats.”⁷⁰ FID operations can combine SOF and conventional force (CF) efforts to

strengthen partner states' abilities to counter an adversary state's or non-state's UW campaigns or other hybrid warfare activities within their borders, to include organized crime or cyber-attacks. Though suitable for integration with major combat operations, Iraq and Afghanistan being examples, FID efforts frequently require only a small footprint and a relatively small budget. For example, aided by 55 U.S. advisors and the expenditure of no more than \$6 billion from 1980 to 1992, the El Salvadorian Government soundly defeated a communist insurgency.⁷¹ Joint and Interagency by nature with the policies set by the Department of State as lead executive agency, FID efforts may also grow to involve all instruments of national power to support host country internal defense and development programs.⁷² Likewise, U.S. FID efforts in a particular country frequently accompany those of other governments, highlighted the need for increased cross-governmental coordination and strategic synchronization.

d. Unconventional Warfare (UW)

While SSA may improve the offensive capabilities of a partner state, that is rarely the primary intent of such assistance. By contrast, UW seeks to aid directly, though with varying degrees of deniability, elements in a geographical space to oppose a governing regime or occupying power. Forms of opposition appropriate for U.S. UW support need not be violent. Rather, opposition itself moves non-linearly along a spectrum including elements of nonviolent resistance, armed resistance, insurgency, and revolution.

Nonviolent resistance can undermine a governing power's legitimacy, credibility and efficacy through protests, demonstration, sit-ins, boycotts, occupation of strategic real estate, and even the establishment of parallel institutions providing services, order, and media. While the governing power may seek to violently repress such resistance, "strategic nonviolent resistance" often further energizes state repression, while discrediting the regime internally and externally.⁷³ From the Indian independence movement under Gandhi to the 1991 dissolution of the Soviet Union and beyond, peaceful resistance has demonstrated its potential and its limitations. Armed resistance is not necessarily more effective than nonviolent resistance, but is characterized by the principled embrace of violence—or may emerge through disaffection with nonviolent means.

Insurgency may be an outgrowth of nonviolent resistance, or it may include the latter with multiple forms of violent activity. The key differentiator, however is the character of insurgency as "the organized use of subversion and violence to seize, nullify, or challenge political control of a region."⁷⁴ Insurgencies may emerge or proceed in various ways, but they generally seek to retain the borders of a region or state as they are, while altering its political regime—in either a transformative or restorative fashion. Insurgencies are thus not traditionally armed separatist movements in terms of goals, notwithstanding some shared tactics and effects. Likewise, while both nonviolent and armed resistance movements as well as insurgencies may in some cases seek merely to alter the policies of a governing power through pressure and coercion, armed separatism seeks to depart from that governing power's territorial authority. Of course,

while differing, both insurgencies and armed separatist movements seeking secession are frequently aided by or reliant on external powers.

A revolution may be the climax of resistance and insurgency, or it may circumvent them through rapid action. Historically, revolutions have emerged as top-down coups d'état that may preserve several elements of the *ancien regime*, or through civil wars or wars against distant political overlords. Likewise, revolutions may seek merely to alter the political order of a state, or may seek far-reaching socio-political and economic changes—in this case the tail of the revolution can be quite long before the advent of a Thermidor. Frequently, revolutions alter the foreign policy and alliance orientations of the state in question, and also entail foreign involvement both in support of the revolutionary movement/regime and to aid the counterrevolution.⁷⁵

Resistance, insurgency, and revolution thus share some commonalities but differ in critical areas with regard to means, participants, and goals. While frequently incited or accelerated by U.S. and partner states' hybrid warfare adversaries, all three are eminently amenable to a whole-of-government and JIIM-enabled UW campaign enabling us to counter and deter adversary aggression. Carefully calibrated by a broader Political Warfare strategy, UW support to indigenous resistance, insurgency, or revolution can promote democratization, respect for human rights, and adherence to peaceful international norms.

(1) Traditional Unconventional Warfare

The foundational capability of Army Special Forces (SF), UW entails “activities conducted to enable a resistance movement or insurgency to coerce, disrupt, or overthrow an occupying power or government by operating through or with an underground, auxiliary, and guerrilla force in a denied area.”⁷⁶ SOF can conduct UW against a state occupying the territory of another country by enabling indigenous resistance forces to disrupt and/or eject the occupying power. SOF-conducted UW can also enable an indigenous insurgency in order to coerce, disrupt, or overthrow the government of a state acting contrary to the interests of the U.S. or its partners. In either case, SOF can conduct a UW campaign autonomously or in support of major combat operations, employing a small footprint and very low signature. Such an approach garners sympathy for resistance or insurgent groups while preserving the cloak of ambiguity regarding American involvement.

(2) Counter-Unconventional Warfare (C-UW)

Recently elaborated by retired Special Forces COL David Maxwell, C-UW connotes “operations and activities conducted by the U.S. Government and supported by SOF against an adversarial state or non-state sponsor of unconventional warfare.” These SOF-supported government initiatives can “decrease the sponsor’s capacity to employ unconventional warfare to achieve strategic aims.”⁷⁷ More broadly, the chief advantage of C-UW is its focus on attriting

an adversary's ability and will to persist in Hybrid Warfare, or to support elements of a resistance or insurgency.

A SOF-led or SOF-supported C-UW campaign can thus entail UW conducted within the territory of the state (or nonstate/parastatal entity) aiding an insurgency or separatist movement in another country—threatening the adversary's "home front" or rear area. C-UW can also include whole-of-government initiatives embracing foreign internal defense (FID) as well as improvements to law enforcement, rule of law (ROL), governance, and citizen inclusion through addressing grievances—thus shoring up the stability and legitimacy of the state and increasing its immunity to adversary UW. C-UW can also include conventional force posturing, regional and global IIA, diplomatic engagement, economic aid and sanctions—or any combination of the above.

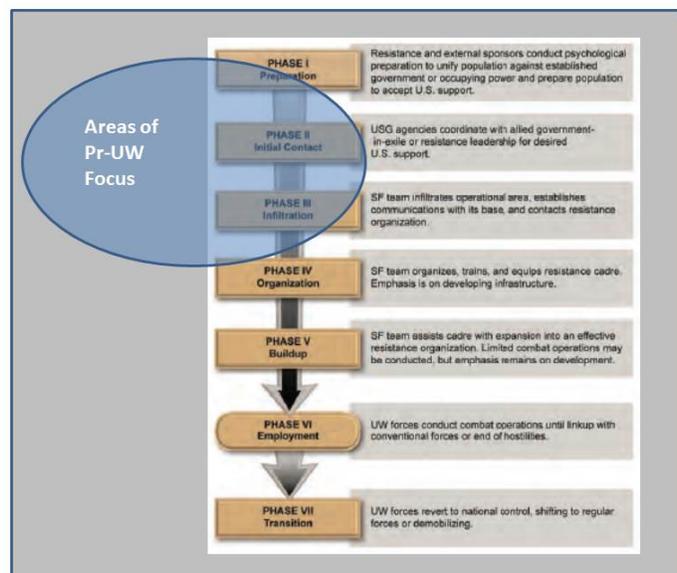
This discussion implies that C-UW campaigns are likely "protracted and psychological-centric in nature." They should thus "comprehensively employ political, economic, military, and psychological pressure" in order to degrade both the will and capability of an adversary to sponsor UW.⁷⁸ Given its "comprehensive" nature, effective C-UW requires an adaptive, holistic U.S. Government approach embracing local partners as well as operations implemented patiently through regional and global JIIM networks.

(3) UW in a Proactive Fashion (Pr-UW)

Traditional UW's definition emphasizes the endurance, if not victory, of the *local* indigenous resistance or insurgency as a metric of success; as such it may limit UW's ability to function as a strategic framework in which *U.S.* as opposed to indigenous interests are paramount. Such an indigenous-focused concern does not characterize adversary prosecution of hybrid warfare.

Additionally, American UW concepts emerged from the OSS' WWII experiences as well as from a post-war context where the Soviet Union had overrun several European states and threatened to do so to others, either through subversion or expansionist warfare. UW was thus understood as a means of response and reaction to a condition already imposed by an outside power on areas of concern to the U.S. Both in the European context as well as in later experiences in Latin America, therefore, UW was used to "fight fires."

UW in a proactive fashion is not a revision or evolution of the traditional Unconventional Warfare addressed above;



rather it is an approach advocates the use of UW activities to “prevent fires” through small footprint, scaled application of force campaigns in order to develop persistent influence among potential UW constituencies; deepen understanding of significant individuals, groups and populations in the Human Domain of the potential UW operational area; and build trust with SOF’s likely UW partners in regions *before* U.S. leaders are constrained to react to crises.

UW in a proactive fashion is thus an extended duration, though low-investment, use of SOF and whole-of-government assets in a region where UW may become desirable and appropriate as conditions evolve. It can evolve establishing awareness of and non-committal relationships with political dissident groups and disenfranchised populations in states whose policies are tending towards the adversarial. In this respect, the proactive liaison with and low-visibility support to an indigenous resistance movement can be an effective counter to current or future actions counter to U.S. national interests by an adversarial governing power. If the groundwork has been laid well in advance, the ability to assist disaffected groups could influence the cost calculus of countries acting against U.S. interests. In effect, UW in a proactive fashion conducted in this fashion becomes long-term, slow-boil coercive UW, or “coercion light.”

UW in a proactive fashion is thus also an enabler of a more aggressive application of UW, reducing the likelihood of a cold-start campaign in the midst of crisis. Essentially extending the first three doctrinal phases of UW, preparation, initial contact, and infiltration, far back in time while engaging in certain elements of the fourth, organizational phase, UW in a proactive fashion seeks to achieve preparation of the environment (PE) objectives with the great focus and depth implied in current doctrine.⁷⁹ Prosecuted over a period of time with whole-of-government and JIIM partners, UW in a proactive fashion allows the U.S. to gain and maintain entree to areas of concern; establish trust with significant individuals, groups, and peoples while developing allies; and ensure cognitive and moral access in the region. This kind of access requires an understanding of the physical, human, and enemy situations, and grants the legitimacy and credibility necessary to form an alliance of interests with those who could prove critical to acting against adversary elements of state and society.

Finally, and with true strategic benefit, proactive application of UW increases the likelihood of producing effects associated with coercive UW without the need to execute all phases of UW itself. By holding out the possibility of achieving traditional UW effects with a particularly small footprint, and by laying the groundwork for a more robust, better-informed conduct of UW or C-UW should the need arise, UW in a proactive fashion is therefore a fundamental component of Strategic Landpower doctrine of “rebalancing... national security strategy to focus on engagement and preventing war.”⁸⁰

e. Information and Influence Activities (IIA)

Information and Influence Activities comprise “the integration of designated information-related capabilities in order to synchronize themes, messages, and actions with operations to

inform United States and global audiences, influence foreign audiences, and affect adversary and enemy decision making.”⁸¹ The U.S. and its partners can take advantage of many forms of IIA in its conduct of sustained whole-of-government Political Warfare. The benefit of *information-*focused activities is to build U.S. and partnered credibility among American and foreign audiences; *influence* can incline governments and populations to support JIIM Political Warfare measures and goals, reducing the ability of certain kinds of hybrid warfare activities to take root in targeted states, and decreasing the legitimacy and credibility of the government undertaking Political Warfare itself. Adhering to law, statute, and democratic norms, carefully calibrated IIA amounts to Strategic Communications: “focused USG [U.S. Government] efforts to understand and engage key audiences in order to create, strengthen or preserve conditions favorable to the advancement of USG interests, policies, and objectives ... through the use of coordinated programs, plans, themes, messages, and products synchronized with the actions of all elements of national power.”⁸²

(1) Public Affairs (PA)

Public Affairs (PA) is a critical mission area for both the DoD and Interagency Departments. PA resides clearly on the “information” side of the information-to-influence spectrum, and the primary audience for PA activities is the American population resident in the homeland and abroad. For the DoD, PA seeks to keep the American people informed of activities, initiatives, and operations, chiefly by interfacing with U.S. media outlets, though engagement with international media is also the norm. DoD PA also addresses the members of the uniformed services. Additionally, by informing “domestic and international audiences of joint operations to support combatant command public information needs,”⁸³ DoD PA “helps to establish the conditions that lead to confidence” in the Joint Force “and its readiness to conduct operations in peacetime, conflict, and war.”⁸⁴

DoS PA is likewise information-focused, with a primarily American audience but a definition of “public” to include non-U.S. audiences. Through timely and accurate information, the DoS Bureau of PA’s mission includes “furthering U.S. foreign policy and national security interests as well as broadening understanding of American values.” The Bureau’s “strategic and tactical communications planning to advance America’s foreign policy interests” results in press briefings, media outreach at home and abroad, use of social media “to engage the public,” coordination of regional media hubs “for engagement of foreign audiences,” arranging community-level interactions for Americans to discuss U.S. foreign policy, and preparing products for the Department abroad.⁸⁵

Both military and civilian agencies’ PA are bound by law and mission to produce information as accurately as possible, as opposed to disinformation and propaganda. Likewise, primary audiences have traditionally been U.S. citizens, civilian and military. Yet, PA does serve a role in furthering our national security through its dissemination of information, and may address foreign audiences. It specifically addresses citizens, and can thus serve a function in

bolstering popular confidence in governments with whom the U.S. seeks to partner through security sector assistance and other means to defeat adversary hybrid warfare. As PA can incline both domestic and foreign populations towards a positive view of U.S. activities through its commitment to accurate information, it can also encourage foreign populations to support U.S. efforts and those of their governments, thus reducing the appeal of hybrid warfare enticements, such as organized crime, political subversion, and insurgency. To achieve a fully integrated approach, the U.S. should reestablish the United States Information Agency (USIA).

(2) Public Diplomacy

U.S. statute, policy, and civil-military norms designate the Department of State as the lead in the USG public diplomacy mission.⁸⁶ DoS and affiliated agencies understand PD as the effort to “understand, inform, engage and influence global audiences, reaching beyond foreign governments to promote greater appreciation and understanding of US society, culture, institutions, values and policies” through means including “international exchanges, international information programs, media research and polling, and support for nongovernmental organizations.”⁸⁷ In supporting interagency initiatives, DOD Joint Publication 3-13 defines PD as overt government activities “to promote United States foreign policy objectives to understand, inform, and influence foreign audiences and opinion makers, by broadening the dialogue between American citizens and institutions and their counterparts abroad.”⁸⁸ More broadly, scholarly observers of American PD have described it as “the conduct of international relations by governments through public communications media and through dealings with a wide range of nongovernmental entities... for the purpose of influencing the politics and actions of other governments.”⁸⁹

These definitions emphasize the role of PD as communicating with and influencing foreign populations, to include officials, in order to influence the foreign policy decisions and actions of governments. By nature and law addressing foreign populations only, it is the tool through which the entire USG can connect with significant individuals, groups, and populations in foreign areas, in order to activate and sway attitudes in favor of U.S. interests, and, if necessary, against the actions of adversary governments, as regards either domestic or foreign policies. While PA is invaluable in strengthening American’s moral resolve to support sustained Political Warfare by honestly and persistently informing our citizens of what the USG does, PD is indispensable in the prosecution of Political Warfare abroad, explicitly seeking to influence foreign populations and officials to support friendly governments in the pursuit of policies and actions aligned with U.S. goals. As presented here, PD is also a natural tool of coercive diplomacy.

While by law the Secretary of State is responsible for all government programs engaging foreign audiences,⁹⁰ other government agencies of course support this task through the ways they influence foreign attitudes in their daily interactions with foreign governments and populations. In this respect DoD components have had a notable role in aiding overall USG PD initiatives

through its own statutorily authorized IIA activities—but perhaps even more so through the narrative communicated by its security cooperation, civil-military operations, and other sustained engagement activities with civilians, law enforcement, military personnel, and government officials abroad. It is critical that DoD and other agencies ensure PD initiatives are aligned with the authorities, themes, and guidelines of DoS PD. Within that rubric, aggressive DoD support to PD aids all the Political Warfare initiatives in this paper. Given the consistent, intense interaction between globally deployed SOF personnel and host country citizens and officials, it is critical that SOF soldiers act with a PD sensibility. Army Special Operators should therefore be included in PD planning and execution as valuable connective tissue among USG agencies.

(3) Cognitive Joint Force Entry (CJFE) and Military Information Support Operations (MISO)

A recent addition to the SOF conceptual arsenal, CJFE seeks to produce strategic effects in the preparation and shaping phases of an operation by inclining foreign populations to favorably view U.S. activities. Intended to achieve persistent influence, CJFE “synchronizes and employs all components of the global information environment,” in order to conduct “information and influence activities to shape the environment beginning in pre-conflict stages.” Two principles integral to CJFE are Cognitive Depth and Cognitive Security. The former encompasses “a population’s realm of perceptions, beliefs, opinions, and attitudes,” while the latter constitutes “as a condition in an operating environment where favorable opinions and perceptions within a populace reduce risk to the force and to the mission. It is characterized by a non-hostile, neutral, or supportive disposition for current and future US activities.” By accessing an environment’s Cognitive Depth through “a persistent, continuous awareness of the global information environment, which provides the ability to anticipate challenges and identify opportunities for early and responsive actions,” SOF is able to attain Cognitive Security.⁹¹

CJFE is a highly relevant enabling concept and functional component of C-UW, UW in a proactive fashion, and the overarching concept of Political Warfare. By conducting IIA aligned with CJFE ideas, SOF can support the whole-of-government effort to decrease the cognitive and affective commitment to UW among key adversary constituencies. These include government and military officials of the adversary state conducting UW; individuals, groups and populations considered critical by the adversary regime; and the adversary state’s proxies seeking to undermine a state supported by the U.S.

Tools to effect this include military information support operations (MISO). These encompass “integrated employment, during military operations, of information-related capabilities in concert with other lines of operation to influence, disrupt, corrupt, or usurp the decision-making of adversaries and potential adversaries.”⁹² MISO pursues these goals in part by communicating “selected information and indicators to foreign audiences to influence their emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and ultimately the behavior of foreign governments, organizations, groups, and individuals,”⁹³ ultimately “to support U.S. national objectives.”⁹⁴

With due regard to law and authorities, MISO is quite able to support PD activities in friendly and adversary regions.⁹⁵

At the same time, CJFE can bolster the willpower of partner governments and populations with whom the U.S. is partnering to counter adversary messaging. In the context of UW in a proactive fashion, CJFE-informed IIA will contribute to preserving moral access among potential UW partners will also diminishing the will to persist in adversarial actions on the part of the government targeted by UW in a proactive fashion. Finally, CJFE is critical to Political Warfare given the ideological content and leverage inherent in effective IIA, as well as the concept’s emphasis on efforts prior to war, in order to “win population-centric conflicts, oftentimes, and preferably, before they start.”⁹⁶

f. The Human Domain (HD)

Initiated by US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), the HD concept understands the operating environment as a synergistically interactive combination of several “domains”: land, air, sea, cyber, and human. The Human Domain focuses on people, in terms of “their perceptions, decision-making, and behavior.” HD understands people as “individuals, groups, and populations” (IGP) who exercise agency within the area of operations or beyond it in a way that can impact U.S., partner, and adversary interests. “The success of any strategy, operation, or tactical action depends on effective operations in the human domain,” and that effectiveness, in turn, hinges on identifying and influencing relevant IGPs to support U.S. goals.⁹⁷ While it's the case that in some campaigns the Human Domain is of secondary or little concern, it is also the case that in population centric conflicts, it is a primary concern.

HD’s five principal “elements” and related “considerations” shape human decision-making and behavior and provide insight into the “culturally relevant and credible sources of legitimacy” on which the Joint Force seeks to draw. By evaluating and fully comprehending these HD elements, SOF and the broader Joint Force will prove “capable of shaping human decision-making and associated behavior to create desired effects.”⁹⁸ As such, understanding the manifestation of HD elements and considerations

| Human Domain Elements | | |
|-----------------------|---|------------------------|
| HD Element | Description | |
| Social | The structure and relationships among groups and institutions, involving competition for influence and efforts to impose interest and perspectives. | |
| Cultural | Impact of a society’s beliefs, customs, way of life on people’s behavior. | |
| Physical | How the natural and manmade world shapes individuals’ priorities. | |
| Informational | The sources, availability, and substance of data. | |
| HD Element | Consideration / Sub-Area | |
| Social | ➤ Public Groups | ➤ Civic Groups |
| | ➤ States Institutions [sic] | ➤ Societal Groups |
| | ➤ Local Government | |
| Cultural | ➤ Ideology | ➤ Religion and rituals |
| | ➤ Tribalism | ➤ Language |
| | ➤ Customs and Beliefs | ➤ Communication |
| | ➤ Ethnicity | |
| Physical | ➤ Geography | ➤ Urbanization |
| | ➤ Topography | ➤ Resources |
| | ➤ Hydrology | ➤ Climatology |
| Informational | ➤ Means | ➤ Internet |
| | | ➤ Print |
| | | ➤ Radio |
| | | ➤ Television |
| | | ➤ Person-to-Person |
| Psychological | ➤ Cognition | ➤ Message |
| | | ➤ Audience |
| | | ➤ Awareness |
| | | ➤ Perception |
| | ➤ Reasoning | ➤ Judgment |
| | | ➤ Emotion |
| | | ➤ Critical Thinking |

in an area of potential operations is crucial to effective Political Warfare activities, just as such an understanding is furthered by long-duration UW. More broadly, the emphasis placed on “psychological variables” by theoreticians of coercive diplomacy, “the importance of actor-specific behavioral models of adversaries,” points to a “situational analysis” by all whole-of-government participants in Political Warfare, which HD enables and requires.⁹⁹

g. Political Warfare

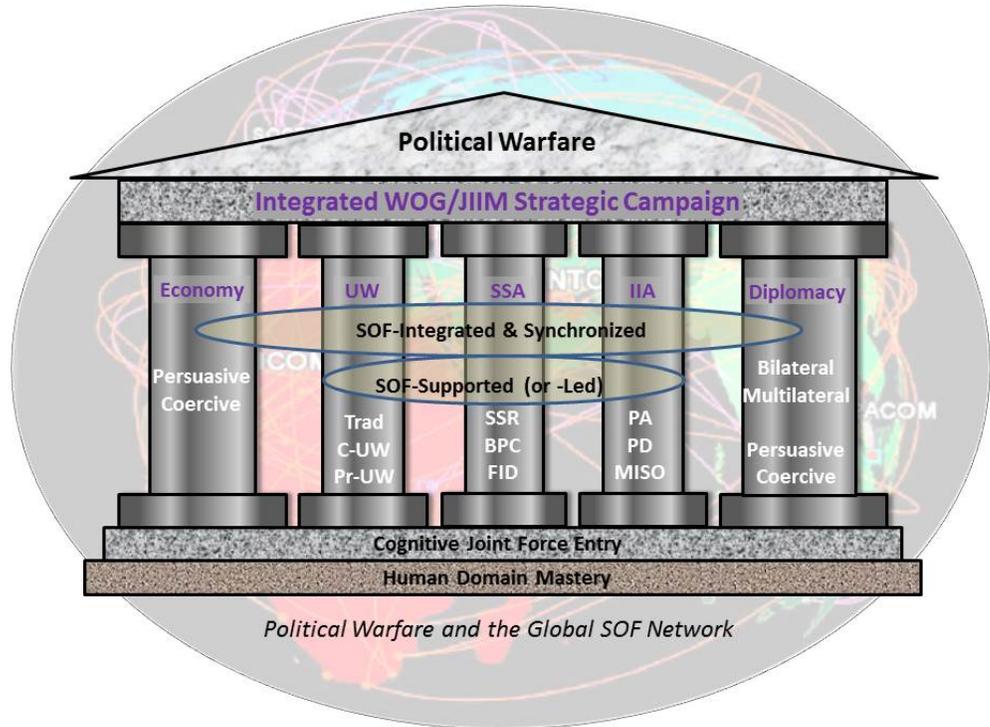
In its simplest form, contemporary Political Warfare combines traditional and novel forms of Special Warfare described in this paper, along with SSA and IIA informed by an overall diplomatic approach integrating persuasion, coercion, and aligned economic measures. All these pillars, military and otherwise, are founded on a mastery of the Human Domain and enabled by Cognitive Joint Force Entry. Though UW’s forms, SSA, and IIA may be conducted autonomously or led by SOF, Political Warfare attains full effect when featuring the full breadth of JIIM contributors *supported* by SOF, with SOF elements acting, perhaps as the JIIM integrator.

Twenty-first-century Political Warfare bears much in common conceptually with Kennan’s mid-twentieth-century articulation of “the employment of all the means at a nation’s command, short of war, to achieve its national objectives,” though with some updating. Indeed, the Political Warfare of the emerging and future operating environments features “shadow conflicts, fought by masked warriors often without apparent state attribution,”¹⁰⁰ in addition to “wars of silicon,” where states and nonstate actors will employ “cutting-edge technology, advanced military capabilities, and substantial financial resources” to “unbalance and unhinge” states “by undercutting civil and military capabilities”¹⁰¹ as a means to intimidate the U.S. or its regional partners during “peacetime.”

Still, an enduring conceptual aspect of Political Warfare is the use of DIME-FIL tools without the direct engagement of military forces for destructive purposes. Embracing persuasion and coercion, as part of “the art of heartening friends and disheartening enemies, of gaining help for one’s cause and causing the abandonment of the enemies’,”¹⁰² Political Warfare prioritizes “the use of words, images, and ideas.”¹⁰³ In the later stages of the Cold War, the U.S. went beyond use of various “colors” of propaganda,¹⁰⁴ and facilitated the establishment of non-governmental organizations whose goals in supporting democratization of politics and media in foreign regions aligned with overall anti-Soviet U.S. policy.¹⁰⁵

Of course, throughout its history, Political Warfare has allowed for using means at higher levels of risk, to include covert operations and influence, to influence outcomes, discourage certain behaviors, or change the regime itself, hence the close relationship between forms of UW and Political Warfare itself.¹⁰⁶

In this regard, the WWII-era British Government Political Warfare Executive's "precepts of political warfare" constitutes a trenchant, enduring definition of Political Warfare as "the systematic process of influencing the will and so directing the actions of peoples in" adversary and adversary-targeted regions, "according to the needs of higher strategy." Political Warfare's



Warfare's "primary aim is to assist the destruction of the foundations" of the adversary state's capacity to obstruct U.S. and partnered interests, in order to "break the will to" sustain actions contrary to U.S. desires. Political Warfare's "ultimate aim is to win the 'War of Ideas,' which is not conterminous with hostilities." Political Warfare requires "co-operation of the [armed] services, aggressive diplomacy, economic warfare and the subversive field-agencies, in the promotion of such policies, measures or actions needed to break or build morale." Finally, Political Warfare "must be geared to strategy."¹⁰⁷

Advancing the concept of Political Warfare will require that practitioners clearly understand U.S. authorities and international law. In terms of U.S. authorities, there is widespread confusion regarding Title 10 and Title 50 authorities, traditionally associated with DOD and intelligence agencies, respectively. Specifically, "the Title 10 -Title 50 debate is the epitome of an ill-defined policy debate with imprecise terms and mystifying pronouncements"¹⁰⁸ The current debate suggests that pursuing political warfare will include addressing U.S. authorities such as Title 10 and Title 50. Similarly, potential challenges related to the interpretation of international law may impact political warfare. For example, "the international law principle of non-intervention prohibits states from using coercive means to intervene in the internal or external affairs of other states."¹⁰⁹ In that context, "the United States has consistently

interpreted the U.N. Charter to ban nearly all foreign support to insurgencies, believing that any assistance beyond non-discriminate humanitarian aid would constitute a use of force in violation of Article 2(4)" of the Charter.¹¹⁰ But conditions have changed, and "this fundamentalist approach, while understandable in the context of the Cold War and the spread of communism, arguably lacks salience in the twenty-first century and runs counter to much state practice."¹¹¹ What is also clear is the recognition that the activities aligned with Title 10 and Title 50 are becoming 'increasingly similar,' which has contributed to the challenge.¹¹² For example, due to their potentially perceived nature and character, activities associated with Unconventional Warfare could require nuanced interpretation to parse the lines of authority. In both U.S. policy and international law, the community of practitioners will need clarity to advance the cause of political warfare.

3-4. Centrality of SOF to Political Warfare

Among the Joint Force's Components, SOF, and SOF now with an operational level vote, are ideally suited to advocate for, integrate, and synchronize the military components of Political Warfare efforts, due to unique operational capabilities, a historically thoroughgoing embrace of WOG approaches, and persistent regional and global engagement, with local state, substate, and international coalition partners.

a. Catalyzing Whole-of-Government Synergies

Inspired by the *ARSOF Operating Concept* and the *USSOCOM SOF Operating Concept*, an embrace of the interagency through meaningful, synergistic partnerships is part of SOF's DNA. SOF personnel actively seek to bridge "critical seams among SOF, CF, and interagency partners," in order to catalyze and sustain whole-of-government initiatives providing U.S. policymakers a continuum of options based on a "blending of capabilities between the DOD and the interagency."¹¹³ In the same vein, the temperament, education, and training of SOF personnel drive them to seek and combine the expertise "resident across SOF, U.S. Government agencies, nongovernment organizations, academia, and think tanks,"¹¹⁴ through enduring personal relationships, operational collaboration, or Special Operations Support Teams assigned by SOCOM "to every appropriate U.S. Government department and agency to coordinate, collaborate, and synchronize SOF operations and activities with those of the host department or agency."¹¹⁵ Likewise, in recent deployments, "SOF developed plans in coordination with the host governments and integrated them into the mission strategic plan of the Chief of Mission ("Country Team") and the theater campaign plan of the Geographic Combatant Commander," with SOF representatives currently available to "every appropriate" U.S. diplomatic mission abroad.¹¹⁶ Therefore, just as SOF's Political Warfare core competencies are inherently whole-of-government in nature, SOF seeks to strengthen the whole-of-government network by acting as its connective tissue.

b. SOF's Regional and Global Engagement

SOF's commitment to Joint and Interagency partnerships functions as a stepping stone to the kind persistent relationships with regional and global partners necessary to enable and sustain effective Political Warfare activities. In order to "protect and advance U.S. national interests in an unstable, complex, and transparent world," SOF seek "enduring and sustainable" international cooperation through forces "postured forward to engage with their strategic partners and build and sustain enduring partnerships."¹¹⁷ Forward-postured SOF elements engage at the local-through-national level of foreign areas, in order to "build relationships that enable SOF to work with and through partners" to meet common challenges while serving broader U.S. national security interests. Likewise, these elements function "autonomously in urban environments as well as austere and remote locations, without any degradation in their capabilities or support."¹¹⁸

Living and operating with foreign counterparts, SOF operators "avoid creating large footprints, disrupting local economic and civil conditions, and causing damage to their partners' narratives."¹¹⁹ Indeed, "foreign partners will at times be more willing to work with SOF due to their small footprint in politically and/or diplomatically sensitive environments."¹²⁰ Preserving the legitimacy of local partners and the credibility of the U.S., SOF teams prepare the environment to meet the challenges of potential crises and conflicts. These kinds of SOF activities themselves constitute ongoing Political Warfare. Yet, through focus on three main kinds of international partners: foreign SOF, foreign conventional armed forces and security forces, and foreign irregular forces, groups, or individuals, SOF's enduring regional engagements also provide the proactive basis for more active Political Warfare through PR-UW, C-UW, FID, and IIA.

In order to obtain maximum operational and strategic effect in support of U.S. policy goals, SOF activate whole-of-government and broader JIIM partnerships through Theater Special Operations Commands (TSOCs) under the operational control of geographic combatant commanders (GCCs). TSOCs, in turn, function as geographical nodes in the Global SOF Network (GSN), a "globally linked force" of SOF and their JIIM, non-governmental, commercial, and academic partners. Envisioned as a "living and learning system that remains agile, responsive, and adaptable as the strategic environment evolves," the GSN exploits "an interdependent web of networks operated by strategic partners," to include those with high-end SOF, CF, and intelligence capabilities, including those from regional and local partners.¹²¹ While it might provide the SOF component to an envisioned "global landpower network,"¹²² the GSN's network of networks enables a shared consensus regarding the strategy and implementation of proactive Political Warfare able to counter and deter hybrid warfare conducted by state and nonstate adversaries targeting the U.S., its at-risk regional partners, and critical NATO alliance members.

As such, SOF consider GSN-embedded steady-state relationships with JIIM partners, and operations maximally integrated with reliable state and nonstate foreign partners, to be a

cornerstone of the SOF sensibility and an extension of the SOF role as the integrating connective tissue supporting the interagency solution.¹²³ Such relationships and the sensibility producing them are also critical to successful prosecution of long-term, patient, Political Warfare.

c. SOF's Unique Operational Capabilities

Over the past several decades, SOF have cultivated and sustained an exquisite level of expertise in capabilities critical to effective Political Warfare. Though known for its Surgical Strike ability to engage global targets with discriminating precision, it is in the realm of Special Warfare that SOF makes its focal Political Warfare contribution. An “umbrella term indicating operating force conduct of combinations of” UW, FID, IIA, counterterrorism and COIN “through and with indigenous personnel,” SOF’s Special Warfare features “discreet, precise, politically astute, and scalable capabilities” enabling “politically sensitive missions over extended periods of time in hostile, austere, and denied environments.” In this respect, SOF’s “deep language and cultural expertise” permits “influence over the human domain in pursuit of U.S. objectives,” while a “proficien[cy] in... building indigenous forces, alongside which they will fight in permissive, uncertain, and hostile environments” renders Army special operators well adapted to the performance of Political Warfare activities described in this paper.¹²⁴

More broadly, throughout the SOF enterprise, we have organizations and senior leaders that now have developed expertise in Political Warfare at the Campaign Level. Additionally, SOF operators “are exceptionally well-educated, expertly trained ... and are critical thinkers, eager to embrace new cultures and understand different ways of thinking. They master interpersonal and social networking skills, knowledge, and understanding that allow them to operate fluidly within diverse non-Western societies.” SOF personnel also understand “the impact and influence that human behavior has across all domains” as well as “the consequences that actions in other domains have on human behavior.” Finally, “They train others in these skills and, in the process, convey the U.S. perspective in a favorable manner that influences partners, adversaries, and relevant populations.”¹²⁵ SOF are thus ideal partners in whole-of-government Political Warfare.

4. Solution Concepts and Components

a. Develop Concepts and Doctrine

In order for DOD, particularly SOF, to successfully fulfill its mission in a US Political Warfare Strategy to be fully integrated as an SOF, Army, and larger Joint Force capability, the family of Joint Operations Concepts (JOpsCs) as well as existing relevant Joint Operating Concepts (JOCs) require review, both with regard to their current integration of UW and other Political Warfare-affiliated ideas, as well as with the intent to revise the relevant them to reflect C-UW, Pr-UW, and IIA informed by CJFE. In the process these Political Warfare components themselves need to be elaborated further to ensure harmonization with validated Joint concepts.

Ultimately, it may be warranted to develop a JOC along the lines of the Joint Concept for Integrated Campaigning (JCIC).

Subsequent to this review and development of appropriate JOpsCs and JOCs, joint doctrine should be revised at the keystone and subordinate levels, with a focus on the Joint Operations (JP 3-0) and Joint Operation Planning (JP 5-0) series of publications. This revision of joint doctrine should be informed by, and assist the revision of service- and SOF-specific doctrinal and technical publications, in the latter case, with a focus on integrating Political Warfare with broader SOF concepts and principles.

b. Develop Strategies

We have seen that the future operating environment will feature state and nonstate competition for regional and global influence, frequently in the form of ideological battles in the human domain. Political Warfare should thus be scoped as an integrating strategy enabling the U.S. to influence local struggles in a positive direction, and policies should be developed assigning Political Warfare as a core mission of government agencies responsible for UW and associated Political Warfare doctrines and capabilities.¹²⁶ Several synergistic initiatives serve this goal:

1) Establish Political Warfare Strategies. Strategies need to emphasize both overt and covert activities across all government agencies “short of war,”¹²⁷ as well as the requirement for approaches nested through multiple echelons. Political Warfare strategies and policies must be planned, coordinated, and synchronized from the strategic national level down to the tactical level. To ensure horizontal synchrony and vertical nesting, an NSC director for political warfare or C-UW activities could oversee development of policies and directives; prioritize efforts and manage interagency concerns; coordinate activities and funding across the government; and provide oversight for the implementation of Presidential Policies or Directives. The Department of State would be the lead for political warfare and C-UW activities, with other Departments and Agencies in a supporting role.¹²⁸ The Department of Defense should be the lead for building a Global Land Power Network (GLN) to enable the development of these strategies and their application.

2) Designate a Lead Organization to Coordinate and Synchronize Efforts at the National and Deployed Echelons. Though whole-of-government, Political Warfare efforts must have a designated lead organization to coordinate and synchronize planning and execution to achieve unified action. Presidential Policy Directive (PPD) 23 *U.S. Security Sector Assistance Policy* affirms that to strengthening allies and partner nations, officials must “foster United States Government policy coherence and interagency collaboration” through a form of “transparency and coordination” able to promote “broader strategies, synchronize agency efforts, [and] reduce redundancies.”¹²⁹ The current counterterrorism apparatus may thus provide a useful example of

what might serve for Political Warfare. Max Boot et al, suggests a Political Warfare apparatus would entail:

- Assigning a political warfare coordinator in the National Security Council (NSC),
- Creating a strategic hub, an interagency coordinating body that pulls all of the local efforts together, in the State Department
- Creating political warfare career tracks in the Department of State (DOS), Department of Defense (DOD), U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).¹³⁰

Given State Department leadership in C-UW, in appropriate countries, the U.S. country team should be the focal point to plan, coordinate, and synchronize political warfare and C-UW activities. Led by the Ambassador, the country team will develop specific country plans and strategies for U.S unilateral activities, integrating host nation activities to obtain mutual objectives.

The National Security Council system would then ensure the coordination and synchronization of strategic political warfare and C-UW policies and directives among theater and operational level organizations, in cases where unconventional warfare is a threat. In turn, the Geographical Combatant Command would coordinate and synchronize political warfare and C-UW activities within a region. This would occur through the Joint Interagency Coordination Group (JIACG), staffed with DOD personnel and representatives of other Departments and Agencies who strive to collaborate, plan, and synchronize interagency efforts to achieve U.S. objectives.¹³¹ At the lower tactical level of command or task force level, the interagency coordination can be exercised through Liaison Officers (LNOs) dispatched from selected Departments or Agencies for specific mission purposes.¹³²

3) Leverage SOF Special Warfare and Surgical Strike Capabilities. Within DOD, SOF is a key component of Political Warfare activities because of their ability to conduct low visibility, low-footprint operations. USSOCOM will plan, coordinate, and synchronize global SOF support to Political Warfare campaigns with interagency partners, GCCs, TSOCs, and vital partners in the GSN, while the TSOC itself will plan SOF's support to their GCCs theater campaign plan. The implications associated with integrating the various capabilities of special warfare and surgical strike supporting global Political Warfare activities indicate the clear need for a Joint Special Warfare Command.

While by no means seeking to dominate a whole-of-government, civilian-led Political Warfare campaign, SOF will emerge as a key, central element of Political Warfare integration and execution, given its expertise contained in its units manned, trained, and equipped to conduct irregular warfare operations and activities to support Political Warfare objectives. SOF's two critical capabilities, special warfare and surgical strike, provide skill sets instrumental to achieving Political Warfare objectives. SOF can provide scalable force packages ranging from

single operators, to small teams, to regimental size forces. SOF can achieve Political Warfare objectives by unilaterally executing operations in a covert or clandestine manner, or through and with indigenous personnel in politically sensitive or hostile environments.

c. Embrace the Human Domain

Successful Political Warfare requires persistent presence and accrued deep understanding, as well as Cognitive Depth and Cognitive Security. These facets of Political Warfare's activities presume an ability to prevail within the Human Domain. Rather than simply operating in the Human Domain or obtaining an experience-based familiarity with specific environments, SOF, its units, and its leader development approaches need to develop and cultivate "a comprehensive discipline to identify, understand, and influence, through word and deed, relevant individuals, groups, and populations." A comprehensive discipline embodied in individual and collective learning, developed concepts, and DOTMLPF derivatives, can elevate Human Domain considerations to the point that they consistently inform the outlining of SOF objectives, actions, and activities.

Rendered formal, a discipline associated with the Human Domain should establish a "common conceptual framework" to generate "comprehension of the elements shaping human decision-making and associated behavior," thus improving environmental understanding throughout a SOF force. Additionally, a formal discipline of Human Domain study, experimentation, and analysis should improve Political Warfare planning and execution through a redefined SOF operational framework that can understand population centric conflicts and can access "culturally-relevant and credible sources of legitimacy to win support and develop partners to their full potential."¹³³

5. Conclusion

The U.S. can choose continued leadership in the global struggle against extremism, wanton violence, and the violation of democratic and civilized norms by states and nonstate actors. Put differently, not only does this leadership garner advantages for the American people, but the international arena remains without another state whose national power, values, norms, practices, and legitimacy enable it to fulfill the leadership role that America has shouldered for more than half a century. Rather than any reluctance to preserve global leadership in recent years, America's senior policymakers have affirmed that American leadership must remain "the one constant in an uncertain world."¹³⁴

Yet, the application of national power through large-scale, extended military engagements, or episodic, targeted forays, will not effectively counter or deter the species of threats to the U.S. and her partners characteristic of the FOE. As these threats proliferate during an area of fiscal limitations and diversify as increasingly hybrid, asymmetric, and ambiguous, U.S. leaders require policy options supported by sustainable, integrated strategies able to proactively shape the operating environment or counter adversary hybrid warfare. In order to be sustainable, such

strategies need to be affordable and account for likely force structure trends to be integrated, strategy needs to embrace the whole-of-government approach in concept and implementation, including foreign state and nonstate partners whenever it serves U.S. and shared interests.

These requirements necessitate an adoption of political warfare, through the evolving synchronization of associated actions, actors, and theaters of operation. The synchronized whole-of-government application of forms of Unconventional Warfare, in support of Security Sector Assistance, diplomatic engagement, economic measures, and cyber considerations, constitutes the twenty-first-century “employment of all the means at a nation’s command, short of war, to achieve its national objectives.” Fully engaging “civilian power” while embracing a small-footprint yet enduring forward military presence,¹³⁵ Political Warfare is politically, economically, and diplomatically sustainable. Political Warfare also presumes mastery of the Human Domain, in order to understand and influence populations while limiting kinetic actions as much as possible. SOF is Joint Force tool prepared to conduct several Political Warfare activities, and is suited to coordinate the military aspects within the overall whole-of-government approach to extended-duration, small-footprint, and integrated campaigns. Fully employing the contribution of SOF Support to Political Warfare will enable the achievement of National Security objectives in the twenty-first century.

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Appendix A

I. Precepts of Political Warfare

Definition.

(1) Political Warfare is the systematic process of influencing the will and so directing the *actions* of peoples in enemy and enemy-occupied territories, according to the needs of higher strategy.

Function.

(2) Political Warfare is the Fourth Fighting Arm an instrument of which is PROPAGANDA and its forces are the dissident elements, potentially or actually existing within the ranks of the enemy and the sympathizers potentially or actually militant in enemy-occupied countries.

(3) Political Warfare’s primary aim is to assist the destruction of the foundations of the enemy’s war machine in conjunction with military action, in order to break the will to war of the enemy nation. It promotes disaffection, resistance and active co-operation amongst the enemy’s military, civil and industrial population, and amongst the subject peoples.

Aims.

(4) Political Warfare's further aim is to ensure that, in conjunction with Allied military intervention, organised elements of resistance and disruption will hasten the collapse of the enemy's forces.

(5) Political Warfare's ultimate aim is to win the "War of Ideas" which is not conterminous with hostilities.

(6) Political Warfare requires for the fulfilment of those aims

the co-operation of the three Fighting Services, aggressive diplomacy, economic warfare and the subversive field-agencies, in the promotion of such policies, measures or actions needed to break or build morale.

Requirements.

(7) Political Warfare requires for the fulfilment of those aims, the mutual confidence of the Foreign Office, the Fighting Services, the Ministry of Economic Warfare and other agencies and, with due regard for security, the disclosure of such secret plans, intelligence or policies as are necessary for its operations.

General Operations.

(8) Political Warfare operates overtly (i.e., through "open" broadcasting) and covertly (through "black" agencies) but its strategy and tactics must be as secret as those of the other Fighting Services, requiring therefore the same protection and security.

Specific Operations.

(9) Political Warfare has a further service to render to the higher strategy, through its experts who, by thorough knowledge of the population and conditions in the regions in which they specialise, can assist in the preparation for specific military operations.

(10) Political Warfare must be geared to strategy, continually linked to, and in consultation on, the day to day conduct of the war.

United Operations.

(11) Political Warfare in the totality of war must combine with all similar activities of the United Nations.

¹⁰⁸ Andru E. Wall, "Demystifying the Title 10-Title 50 Debate: Distinguishing Military Operations, Intelligence Activities, and Covert Action," *Harvard National Security Journal* 85, no. 3 (2011), 86.

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¹¹³ USASOC, *ARSOF Operating Concept 2022*, 15.

¹¹⁴ USASOC, *ARSOF Operating Concept 2022*, 16.

¹¹⁵ USSOCOM, *Special Operations Forces Operating Concept*; JP 3-05: *Special Operations*, III-02.

¹¹⁶ USSOCOM, *Special Operations Forces Operating Concept*, 4, 9.

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¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

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¹²³ See Chuck Ricks, ed., *The Role of the Global SOF Network in a Response Constrained Environment* (JSOU, November 2013): https://jsou.socom.mil/JSOU%20Publications/Global%20SOF%20Network%20Resource%20Constrained%20Environment_FINAL.pdf.

¹²⁴ USASOC, *ARSOF Operating Concept 2022*, 26 September 2014, 11.

¹²⁵ USSOCOM, *Special Operations Forces Operating Concept*, May 2013, 10.

¹²⁶ Max Boot, Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, Michael Doran, and Roger Hertog, "Political Warfare."

¹²⁷ There are many such “short of war” activities. The following comprises a sampling:

- Economic sanctions against countries, groups, and individuals, as well as coercive trade policies
- Diplomacy, including boycotting international events, establishing treaties or alliances to counter adversary UW, severing diplomatic relations, or excluding offending states from membership in international forums
- Support for “friendly” insurgent groups to coerce, disrupt, or overthrow an adversary regime,
- Support for friendly governments to counter adversary political warfare activities,
- Support for foreign political actors and parties opposing adversarial regimes
- Strategic communications and information operations to expose adversary activities.

¹²⁸ Kennan is again suggestive in this regard. At the strategic level, he recommended a covert political warfare operations directorate or board under the NSC Secretariat, with the director designated by and responsible to the Secretary of State. In this approach, the directorate’s staff would be divided equally between State Department and Defense Department representatives selected by the Secretaries, and the directorate would have complete authority over covert political warfare operations. George Kennan, "Policy Planning Memorandum," May 4, 1948, National Archives and Records Administration, RG 273, Records of the National Security Council, NSC 10/2, accessed June 9, 2014, <http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/history/johnson/65ciafounding3.htm>.

¹²⁹ The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, "Fact Sheet: U.S. Security Sector Assistance Policy," The White House, April 5, 2013, accessed July 3, 2014, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/04/05/fact-sheet-us-security-sector-assistance-policy>.

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¹³¹ United States Joint Forces Command, *Commander's Handbook for Joint Interagency Coordination Group*, 1 March 2007, II-1.

¹³² As an example, see U.S. Pacific Command, "Joint Interagency Task Force West," U.S. Pacific Command, accessed July 10, 2014, <http://www.pacom.mil/Contact/Directory/JointIntegragencyTaskForceWest.aspx>; The JIATF West Strategy is built on the premise of interagency cooperation. JIATF West partners with U.S. and foreign law enforcement agencies through regional U.S. Embassies and their respective country teams. We also partner with regional law enforcement agencies, such as New Zealand Police, Australian Federal Police, and Australian Customs Service, who coordinate complementary capabilities in the region. We bring military and law enforcement capabilities together to combat and reduce transnational crime in the Asia-Pacific.

¹³³ USSOCOM, *Operating in the Human Domain* Version 0.70 (5 September 2014), 6-7.

¹³⁴ “Weekly Address: America is Leading the World,” The White House Blog, 27 Sep 2014: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2014/09/27/weekly-address-america-leading-world>.

¹³⁵ See Hillary Rodham Clinton, “Leading through Civilian Power: Redefining American Diplomacy and Development,” *Foreign Affairs*, November–December 2010: <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/66799/hillary-rodham-clinton/leading-through-civilian-power>; Department of State & USAID, *Leading Through Civilian Power: The First Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review*.